catharsis

By Ahmki

"DON'T MAKE EYE CONTACT WITH HIM. HE'LL BEAT YOU UP..."

"I HEAR [illegible] HE BEATS UP KIDS DURING HIS MORNING JOG."

"HE'S PROBABLY GONE TO JAIL BEFORE."

"He looks scary."

"Wow. You know... your bad mood is ruining everyone else's mood."

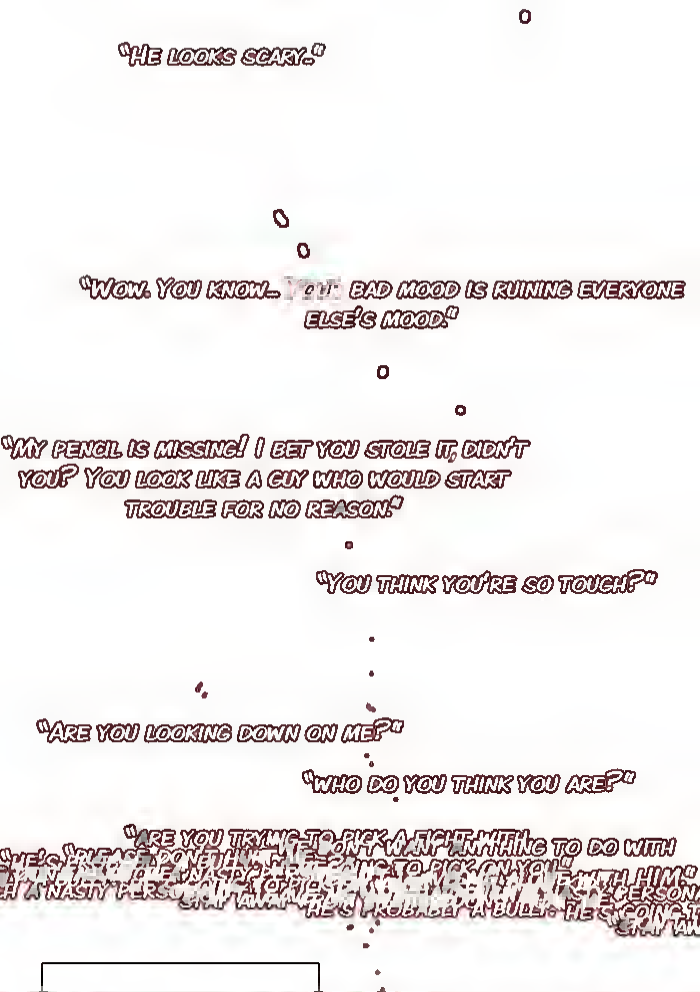
"My pencil is missing! I bet you stole it, didn't you? You look like a guy who would start trouble for no reason."

"You think you're so tough?"

"Are you looking down on me?"

"Who do you think you are?"

"Are you trying to pick a fight?"



My name is Johan Jordan. I'm 17 years old and a 3rd year in high school.

I'M 179 CM AND 63 KG. I USUALLY HAVE A SCOWL ON MY FACE, AND I DON'T REALLY TALK A LOT.
I'M LABELED AS SCARY, A DELINQUENT, AND A MOODY GUY. PEOPLE MY AGE AVOID ME, AND ADULTS THINK I'VE BEEN HELD BACK OFTEN IN SCHOOL WHEN THEY SEE ME IN MY SCHOOL UNIFORM.
BUT THAT'S NOT WHO I REALLY AM.

Honestly, it really upsets me.

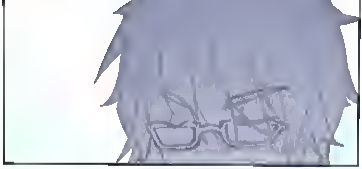
I feel like even if I try to explain myself, no one will really listen or assume that I'm lying.

So I stay quiet. (And yet that still seems to bother people all the same.)

THIS IS ME AT HOME.

OPPOSITE OF THE RUMORS, I DON'T JOG IN THE MORNING. AND IF I DID, I WOULDN'T BE BEATING UP KIDS ALONG THE WAY.

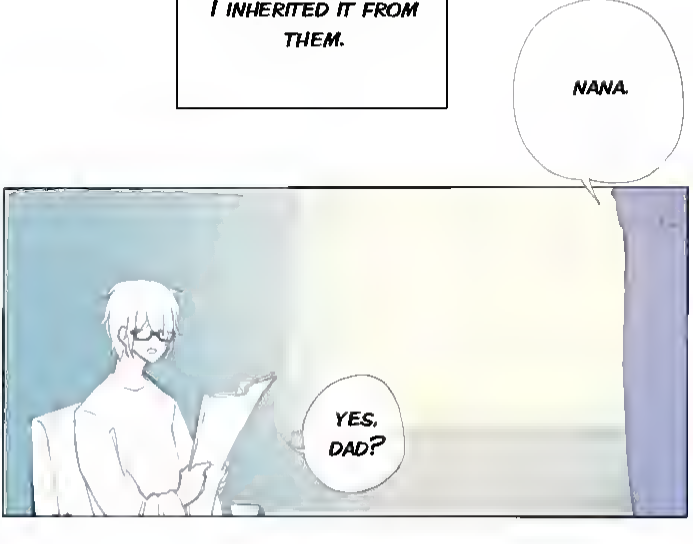
I'VE NEVER GONE TO JAIL BEFORE EITHER. I'M NO DELINQUENT AND DO CARE GREATLY ABOUT MY FUTURE.



THE SCOWL I WEAR IS MY NEUTRAL FACE. I GLARE BECAUSE I SQUINT HARD BY REFLEX WHEN I'M NOT WEARING MY GLASSES.

I'VE ALWAYS BEEN MISUNDERSTOOD, BUT THINGS GET BLOWN OUT OF PROPORTION NOW THAT I'M OLDER.

I'M NOT THE ONLY ONE THOUGH. MY PARENTS ARE ALSO QUITE OFTEN MISUNDERSTOOD. I INHERITED IT FROM THEM.



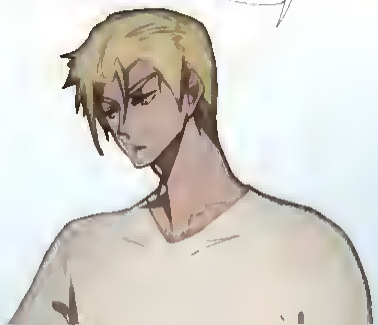
NANA IS MY PARENTS' NICKNAME FOR ME.

THEY TOOK THE LAST TWO SYLLABLES OF JOHAN JORDAN AND REVERSED THEM TO FORM "NANA".

I'M NOT SURE WHY, BUT I'M GUESSING IT WAS SUPPOSED TO CREATE A CUTE IMAGE FOR ME.

YOU'RE IN TROUBLE.

I FOUND YOUR GRADED MATH TEST IN THE TRASH YESTERDAY.



This is my dad. He may not look like it, but he's a doctor. (My mom is currently at work, and she is a pharmacist.)

...your mother is going to flip out when she hears about this too.

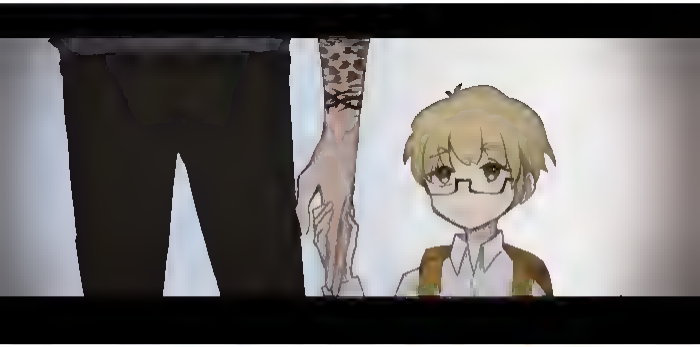
GULP

He covers those tattoos up daily with a lot of concealer and long sleeves. When he's not in his work outfit, you couldn't have guessed his profession.

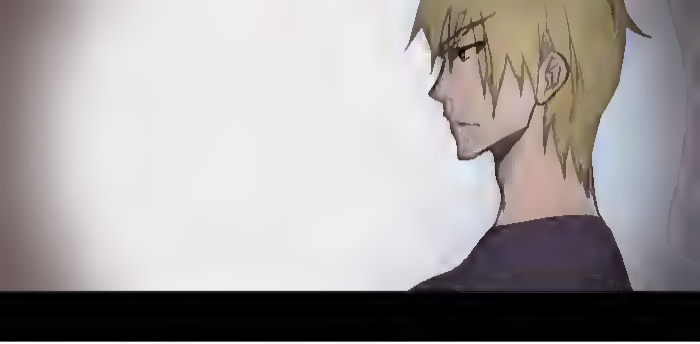
WITH HIS NATURAL SCOWL, FURROWED BROWS, AND TATTOOS, HE OFTEN GETS DIRTY LOOKS FROM STRANGERS WHO ASSUME HE IS A CRIMINAL.

I REMEMBER THE LOOKS HE GOT FROM OTHER PARENTS WHEN HE USED TO WALK ME TO SCHOOL AS A CHILD.

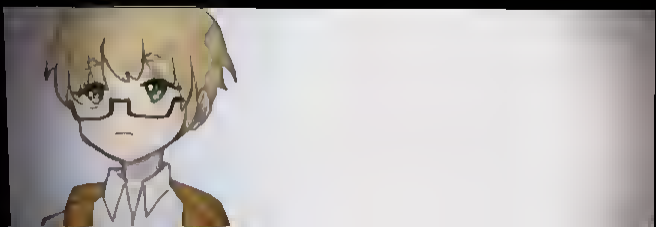
I HEARD THEM SAY A LOT OF BAD THINGS ABOUT MY DAD.



THEY KNEW NOTHING ABOUT HIM, AND YET THEY MADE ALL THESE ASSUMPTIONS AND PASSED IT AROUND AS IF THEY TRUE.



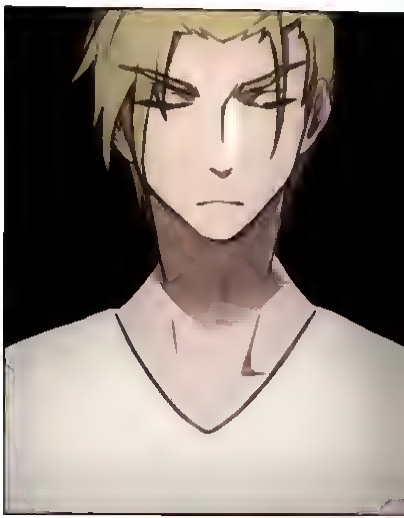
BUT NO MATTER HOW MUCH THEY TALKED ABOUT HIM, HE STAYED STRONG. I KNEW HE COULDN'T HAVE CARED LESS ABOUT WHAT THEY THOUGHT.

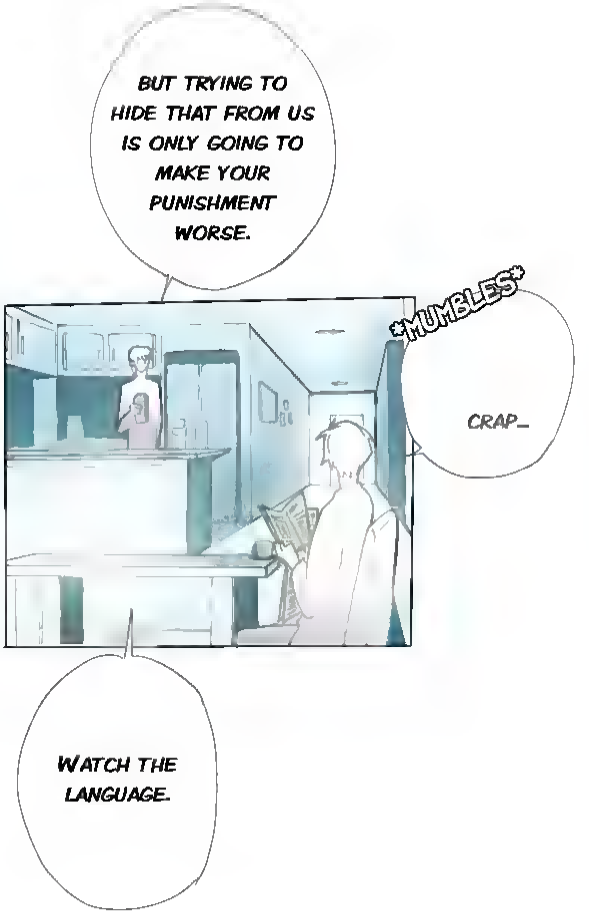


...IF ONLY I COULD DO THE SAME.

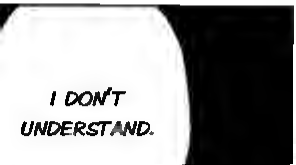
NANA...

I GET IT.
IT BELONGS IN THE TRASH BECAUSE THE SCORE YOU GOT IS GARBAGE.




BUT TRYING TO HIDE THAT FROM US IS ONLY GOING TO MAKE YOUR PUNISHMENT WORSE.
MUMBLES
CRAP_
WATCH THE LANGUAGE.

.....
SORRY.


I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

Is this some kind of rebellious stage?
You were always the type to be excited for school and to get good grades.
What happened?

WHEN DID THAT ALL CHANGE?
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WHEN IT ALL FIRST CHANGED?